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ITEM 8:* THE ENVIRONMENT FUND, OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS AND ADMINISTRATION

PROGRAMME AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT COSTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT FUND: PERFORMANCE REPORT AND PROPOSED REVISED BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

PROVISION OF LANGUAGE FACILITIES TO THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

Summary

The present report describes developments that have occurred since the sixteenth session of the Governing Council concerning the provision of language facilities for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP. It outlines the implications of General Assembly resolution 46/185 C, section XI, paragraph 2, in which the General Assembly took note of the Secretary-General's proposal on sharing the financing of the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and sets out the views of the Executive Director thereon.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Council may wish to note that costs incurred for interpretation facilities for the Committee of Permanent Representatives in 1992 and in the first part of 1993 have been borne by the United Nations regular budget; express the view that services supporting the Governing Council of UNEP as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, should be financed from the resources of the regular budget; request the Secretary-General to review his proposals regarding financing the costs of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with a view to having such costs borne entirely by the regular budget.

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* Refers to the number of the item on the Provisional Agenda (UNEP/GC.17/1).

PROVISION OF LANGUAGE FACILITIES TO THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

1. The Governing Council in its decision 15/12 of 25 May 1989, recognized the requirements for full language services for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and agreed to meet them as soon as funding for the costs of those services could be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations. In submitting proposals to the Secretary-General for the regular budget for 1992-1993 in respect of UNEP, the Executive Director included provision for full language services for the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Those were not, however, retained by the Secretary-General in his proposed programme budget for 1992-1993.

2. Following its review of the United Nations proposed programme budget for 1992-1993, the Committee for Programme and Coordination requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly a report on the overall issue of conference servicing relating to meetings of United Nations intergovernmental bodies convened at Nairobi and recommended that the General Assembly consider the practice of including the costs of such servicing under section 17 (UNEP) of the programme budget.

3. In his report to the General Assembly,(1) the Secretary-General pointed out that roughly 25 per cent of the permanent conference-servicing establishment of UNEP is charged against the regular budget. It was proposed that 25 per cent of the costs for providing full language services to the Committee of Permanent Representatives be included under the United Nations regular budget. The Secretary-General went on to state that the General Assembly might wish to request the Governing Council of UNEP to authorize the financing of the balance from the Environment Fund.

4. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), following its review of the Secretary-General's report, informed the General Assembly that it did not object to the financing of 25 per cent of the requirements of the Committee of Permanent Representatives from the regular budget. The General Assembly, by its resolution 46/185 C, section XI, of 20 December 1991, took note of the report of the Secretary-General and endorsed the recommendation of the ACABQ.

5. When apprised of the resolution of the General Assembly, the Executive Director informed the Secretary-General that, pending consideration of the question by the Governing Council at its seventeenth session in 1993, resources from the Environment Fund could not be made available for the provision of language services to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Agreement was subsequently reached that the costs of interpretation for the Committee of Permanent Representatives for 1992 and for the first half of 1993 (i.e. before the seventeenth session of the Governing Council) would be borne by the regular budget and that the matter would be presented to the Governing Council at its seventeenth session.

6. Three meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives with full interpretation were held in 1992, and two are planned for the first part of 1993 - all to be financed by the regular budget. The total estimated costs for those five meetings are $366,000 or an average of $73,200 per meeting. On the assumption that eight meetings would be held in 1994-1995, it is estimated that the meetings in 1994-1995 would cost $645,000, allowing for inflation.

7. If the proposal of the Secretary-General, which the General Assembly took note of in its resolution 46/185 C, were to be accepted by the Governing Council, the Environment Fund would have to provide for 75 per cent of the costs of providing full language services to the Committee of Permanent Representatives. These costs would apply to the two meetings scheduled to take place in 1993 after the seventeenth session of the Governing Council and the eight meetings foreseen for 1994-1995. The total costs for the two meetings in 1993 are estimated at $150,000 and the costs of eight meetings in 1994-1995 are estimated at $645,000. The share to be borne by UNEP would then be $113,300 in 1993 and $483,800 in 1994-1995. No provision currently exists for this in the Programme and Programme Support Costs budget 1992-1993. Nor has any provision been made in the proposed 1994-1995 budget. If the Governing Council were to decide to finance the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives from the Environment Fund, the sums in question would have to be added to the revised estimates for 1992-1993 and to the proposed budget for 1994-1995, respectively.

8. As stated in paragraph 1 above, the Governing Council decided that full language services for meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives should be provided as soon as funding for the costs of those services could be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations. In the view of the Executive Director, this is consistent with General Assembly resolution 2297 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the resolution founding UNEP, which provides that the costs of servicing of the Governing Council shall be borne by the regular budget. It follows that the costs of servicing the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a subsidiary body of the Governing Council, should also be borne entirely by the regular budget. It is the understanding of the Executive Director that the cost of providing conference services to the governing bodies of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Childrens Fund, programmes that are funded entirely on a voluntary basis, are borne by the regular budget of the United Nations. Services supporting the Governing Council of UNEP as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should also come from the resources of the regular budget. The Governing Council might, therefore, wish to request the Secretary-General to review his proposals regarding the financing of the costs of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, with a view to having such costs borne entirely by the regular budget.

Note

1. A/C.5/46/29.